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Britannia *Victrix*

by

ROBERT BRIDGES

*Poet Laureate*

*Nov. 23, 1918*

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## BRITANNIA VICTRIX

*Careless wast thou in thy pride,  
Queen of seas and countries wide,  
Glorying on thy peaceful throne:—  
Can thy love thy sins atone?  
What shall dreams of glory serve,  
If thy sloth thy doom deserve,  
When the strong relentless foe  
Storm thy gates to lay thee low?*

*Careless, ah! he saw thee leap  
Mighty from thy startled sleep,  
Heard afar thy challenge ring:  
'Twas the world's awakening.*

*Welcome to thy children all  
Rallying to thee without call  
Oversea, the sportive sons  
From thy vast dominions!  
Stern in onset or defence,  
Terrible in their confidence*

*Dauntless wast thou, fair goddess,  
Neath the cloud of thy distress ;  
Fierce and mirthful wast thou seen  
In thy toil and in thy teen ;  
While the nations looked to thee,  
Spent in world-wide agony.*

*Oft, throughout that long ordeal  
Dark with horror-stricken duty,  
Nature on thy heart would steal  
Beckoning thee with heavenly beauty,  
Heightening ever on thine isle  
All her seasons' tranquil smile ;  
Till thy soul anew converted,  
Roaming o'er the fields deserted  
By thy sorrow sanctified,  
Found a place wherein to hide.*

*Soon fresh beauty lit thy face,  
Then thou stood'st in Heaven's high grace :—  
Sudden in air on land and sea  
Swell'd the voice of victory.*

*Now when jubilant bells resound  
And thy sons come laurel-crown'd,  
After all thy years of woe  
Thou no longer canst forgo,  
Now thy tears are loos'd to flow.*

---

*Land, dear land, whose sea-built shore  
Nurseth warriors evermore,  
Land, whence Freedom far and lone  
Round the earth her speech has thrown  
Like a planet's luminous zone,—  
In thy strength and calm defiance  
Hold mankind in love's alliance!*

*Beauteous art thou, but the foes  
Of thy beauty are not those  
Who lie tangled and dismay'd:  
Fearless one, be yet afraid  
Lest thyself thyself condemn  
In the wrong that ruin'd them.*

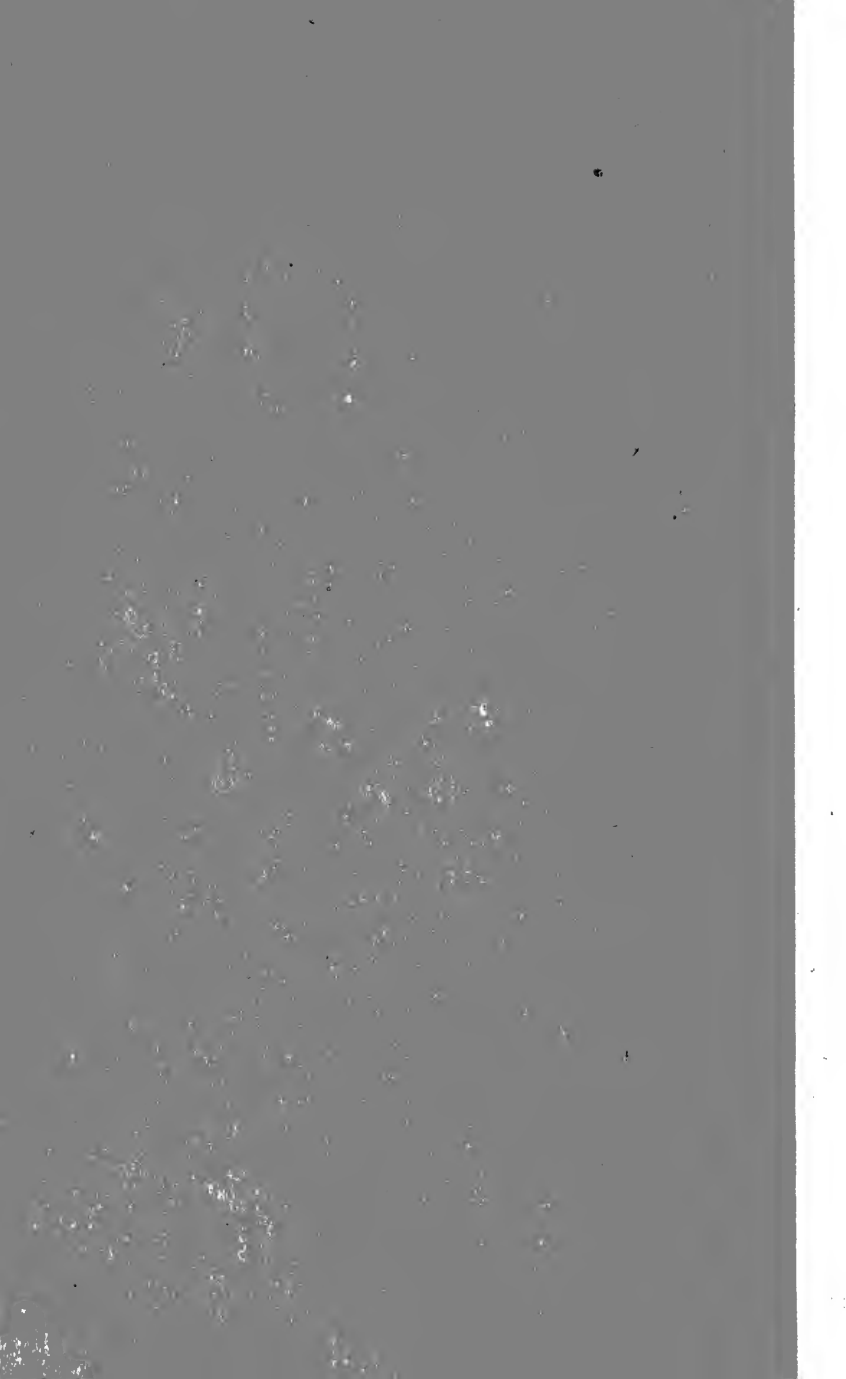
*God, who chose thee and upraised  
'Mong the folk, (His name be praised!)  
Proved thee then by chastisement  
Worthy of His high intent,  
Who, because thou could'st endure,  
Saved thee free and purged thee pure,  
Won thee thus His grace to win,  
For thy love forgave thy sin,  
For thy truth forgave thy pride,  
Queen of seas and countries wide,—  
He who led thee still will guide.*

*Hark! thy sons, those spirits fresh  
Dearly housed in dazling flesh,  
Thy full brightening buds of strength,  
Ere their day had any length  
Crush'd, and fallen in torment sorest,  
Hark! the sons whom thou deplorest  
Call;—I hear one call; he saith:  
“Mother, weep not for my death;  
'Twas to guard our home from hell,  
'Twas to make thy joy I fell  
Praising God, and all is well.  
What if now thy heart should quail  
And in peace our victory fail!  
If low greed in guise of right  
Rout and rive thy gather'd might,  
And thy power mankind to save  
Fall and perish on our grave!  
On my grave, whose legend be  
Fought with the brave and joyfully  
Died in faith of victory.  
Follow on the way we won!  
Thou hast found, not lost thy son.”*

*November 23.*







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